



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



PURPLE HEART RECOGNITION DAY

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Governor Kristi Noem has proclaimed Monday, August 7, 2023, as “Purple Heart Recognition Day,” calling on all South Dakotans to acknowledge and remember the sacrifices made by the brave members of our military who are recipients of the Purple Heart Medal.

The Purple Heart, our nation’s oldest military medal, is presented to service members who have been wounded or killed as a result of enemy action while serving in the U.S. military. A Purple Heart is a solemn distinction and means a service member has greatly sacrificed themselves, or paid the ultimate price, while in the line of duty.

According to the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, more than 1.8 million Purple Heart medals have been presented to service members since the award was created in 1782.

“Every day, America’s service members selflessly put their lives on the line to keep us safe and free,” said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

SDDVA encourages all South Dakotans to set aside time on August 7 to pay tribute to our heroes who have been honored with the Purple Heart. It is important for all Americans to learn the history of this important military award and the sacrifices made by the recipients.

“Our military remains as strong today as it has ever been. America’s veterans have been defined by the virtues of selfless service, sacrifice, and devotion to duty,” said Whitlock. “These men and women, who serve and have served, are the flesh and blood of American exceptionalism.”

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Executive Proclamation

State of South Dakota

Office of the Governor

Whereas, the people of South Dakota have great admiration and the utmost gratitude for all the men and women who selflessly served their country and this state in the armed forces; and,

Whereas, veterans have paid the high price for freedom by leaving their families and communities and placing themselves in harm's way for the good of all; and,

Whereas, the Purple Heart, originally known as the Military Merit, is the oldest military decoration in the United States still given; and,

Whereas, the Purple Heart is a combat decoration awarded to a member of the United States Armed Forces who has been wounded or killed; and,

Whereas, recipients of the Purple Heart made the ultimate sacrifice for the preservation of the United States of America and national interests at home and abroad; and,

Whereas, by South Dakota statute, August 7 has been designated as the day we remember and recognize South Dakota veterans who are recipients of the Purple Heart Medal:

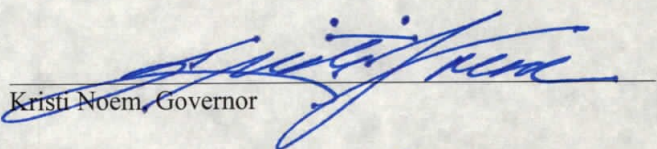
Now, Therefore, I, Kristi Noem, Governor of the State of South Dakota, do hereby proclaim August 7, 2023, as

PURPLE HEART DAY

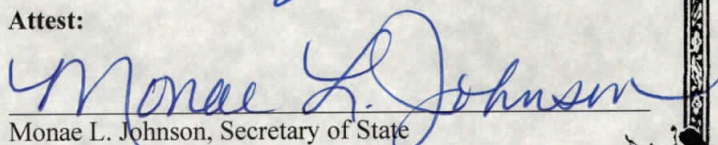
in South Dakota and I ask all citizens to honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's men and women in uniform wounded or killed by the enemy while serving to protect the freedoms enjoyed by all Americans.



In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of South Dakota, in Pierre, the Capital City, this Twenty-ninth Day of June in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Twenty-Three.


Kristi Noem, Governor

Attest:


Monae L. Johnson, Secretary of State

SDDVA UPDATE

Sulyn Jones is the newest member to the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs team in the Sioux Falls Claims Office. Jones will serve as a claims examiner.

Jones grew up in California where she had a career as a police records specialist with Riverside Police Department. She moved to South Dakota in 2015 and has worked a variety of jobs before joining SDDVA. Sulyn has a degree in criminal justice.

Please join us in welcoming Sulyn to our team.

This past weekend, SDDVA's Field Service Officers Kevin Bowen and Guy Arnold attended the homecoming celebrations for American Legion State Commander Courtney Steffen and State American Legion Auxiliary President Patsy Madsen. Congratulations to both Courtney and Patsy as they carry out their missions.



Sulyn Jones



American Legion State Aux. President Patsy Madsen
and SDDVA Kevin Bowen

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard, Claims Office Manager Brett Dickerson, and South Dakota Veterans Cemetery Representative DJ Iles attended a luncheon this week honoring veterans and first responders. The lunch was served by "The Heroes Journey."



American Legion State Commander Courtney Steffen

MJFSVH UPDATE

Residents from the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home had a great outing at Bear Country USA last week.

Whoever was in charge of the welcoming committee did a great job!

Special thanks to Laura Inman and her team for coordinating these wonderful trips!



VA EXPANDS BREAST CANCER SCREENINGS AND MAMMOGRAMS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs announced that veterans under 40 who may have been exposed to burn pits and other toxins during their service are now eligible for breast cancer risk assessments and mammograms (as clinically appropriate) at VA.

Veterans are eligible for these screenings regardless of age, symptoms, family history, and whether they are enrolled in VA health care. Generally, the VA follows American Cancer Society guidelines for breast cancer screenings, meaning that — aside from those covered by this new policy — most veterans become eligible for screenings and mammograms at age 40. This potentially life-saving expansion drives progress toward the goals of the [Cancer Moonshot](#).

The VA is expanding eligibility for breast cancer risk assessments and clinically appropriate mammograms as a part of implementing the [Dr. Kate Hendricks Thomas SERVICE Act](#). Dr. Hendricks Thomas was a Marine Corps Veteran who deployed to Iraq in 2005, where she was exposed to burn pits. In 2018, she was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer. She tragically passed away April 5, 2022, at the age of 42.

These services are available to veterans who served in the following places and timeframes:

- Iraq between Aug. 2, 1990, and Feb. 28, 1991, and from March 19, 2003, until the VA determines burn pits are no longer used in Iraq.
- The Southwest Asia theater of operations, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar (but not including Iraq), from Aug. 2, 1990, until the VA determines burn pits are no longer used in such locations.
- Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Yemen from Sept. 11, 2001, until the VA determines burn pits are no longer used in such locations.
- Other locations and time periods as determined by the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

The risk assessment is a series of questions about a patient's toxic exposure(s), family medical history, and other risk factors to determine whether they should have a mammogram. Getting screened for breast cancer is an important part of maintaining overall health, and mammograms are the best way to find and treat breast cancer early, when there is a 99% survival rate. That's why early detection is a central pillar of the Cancer Moonshot, which is mobilizing efforts toward achieving two clear goals: to prevent more than 4 million cancer deaths by 2047, and to transform the experience of people who are touched by cancer.

Breast cancer is also a presumptive condition under the PACT Act, the largest expansion of veterans care and benefits in generations.

Veterans who are interested in the breast cancer risk assessment screenings can contact their VA primary care provider or reach out to their [local VA medical center](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jul 28-29—"Last Out" production—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls
Jul 29-30—Sioux Falls Air Show
Jul 29—Korean War/Defense Veterans Appreciation Day—Brookings County Outdoor Adventure Center—
(2810 22nd Avenue S)—Brookings—9:00 am to 3:00 pm (CT)
Aug 6—American Legion Riders Post 71 Annual Fall River Freedom Ride—Begins at Michael J. Fitzmaurice State
Veterans Home—(2500 Minnekahta Avenue)—Hot Springs—9:00 am (MT)
Aug 8—VA PACT Act Benefits and Healthcare Drive—Armory at the SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1700 W. Russell
Street)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am to 1:30 pm and 4:00 to 6:30 pm (CT)
Aug 10-11—South Dakota Suicide Prevention Conference—Sioux Falls Convention Center
Aug 15—2nd Annual American Legion Auxiliary Unity 15 "Chip in for Vets" Golf Tournament—Elmwood Golf
Course—(2604 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—Shotgun Start at 9:00 am (CT)
Aug 19—SFVAHCS Show and Shine
Aug 26—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—LTC Gordon J. Lippman—St. Rose of Lima Community Hall—
(305 Pine Street)—Hill City—2:00 pm (MT)
Aug 27—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—SP5 John P. Beckers—VFW (Main Street)—Burke—2:00 pm (CT)
Aug 28—Barrel House Day of Giving for Midwest Honor Flight
Aug 31—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair
Aug 31—Sept 4—SD State Fair
Sep 2—727th/DAV Poker Run—Dacotah Bank Center—(824 32nd Avenue)—Brookings—10:00 am (CT)
Sep 4—State Offices Closed
Sep 5—7—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls
Sep 8-10—PVA North Central Chapter Trapshoot—Crooks Gun Club
Sep 13-16—Black Hills Veterans March and Marathon
Sep 16—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—LT Peter H. Monfore—Community Hall—(605 8th Street)—
Springfield—2:00 pm (CT)
Sep 18—Texas Roadhouse Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—(Sioux Falls and Sioux City)—4:00 pm—9:00 pm (CT)
Sep 20—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Rapid City—9:00 am (MT)
Sep 26—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 16
Oct 7—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—WO1 Roger S. Cameron—Community Building—(311 W. Main)—
Pierpont—2:30 pm (CT)
Oct 7—DAV Fall Conference—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls
Oct 9—State Offices Closed
Oct 10—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 17
Oct 14—SD Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—1LT Thomas M. Martin—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W.
Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Oct 21—Elvis Night/50's Dance Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell
Street)—Sioux Falls
Nov 4—Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair—Sturgis Community Center—11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
Nov 10—State Offices Closed
Nov 13—Barrel House Day of Giving for SDVC Wreaths Across America
Nov 15—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—(1519 W. 51st Street)—Sioux Falls—
9:00 am (CT)
Nov 15—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Sioux Falls

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov 16—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Northeast
Nov 17—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Central
Nov 17—MINGO (Music Bingo) Fundraiser for Midwest Honor Flight—Severance Brewing Co.—(701 N. Phillips Avenue—Suite 110)—Sioux Falls—6:00–9:00 pm (CT)
Nov 18—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—West River
Nov 23—State Offices Closed
Dec 16—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 25—State Offices Closed

2024 Events

Jan 10—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—2:00 pm (CT)
Jan 10—SDDVA and South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Reception—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—5:30 pm (CT)
Feb 16—18—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Deadwood
Jun 20—23—American Legion State Conference—Pierre
Dec 14—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)

2025 Events

Feb 14—16—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Oacoma
Jun 19—22—American Legion State Conference—Huron
Dec 13—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)



PACT Act

File your PACT Act claim by August 9 to be eligible for backdated benefits.

There's no deadline to apply for PACT Act benefits. But if you file your PACT Act claim—or quickly submit your intent to file—by August 9, 2023, you may receive benefits backdated to August 10, 2022.

So don't wait, apply today. Reach out to your county or tribal veterans service officer or SDDVA Claims Office – 605-333-6869.

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